



The Association of Hebrew Catholics
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The Messiah of Israel

Talk 2. Why Did the Son of God Become Man?

The Incarnation Makes Possible a Spousal Union between God and Man

(Hosea 2:19-20)

“And I will betroth you to me for ever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord.”

The Incarnation Makes Possible a Spousal Union between God and Man

(John 3:29)

St. John the Baptist had the glory of proclaiming that the promised Bridegroom was come at last, saying to his disciples:

“He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice. For this reason my joy has been fulfilled.”

The Incarnation Makes Possible a Spousal Union between God and Man

(Matt 9:15)

Jesus taught in parables that He is the Bridegroom. When asked why His disciples did not fast in the manner of the Pharisees, He explained:

“The wedding guests cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them. . . . The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.”

The Incarnation Makes Possible a Spousal Union between God and Man

2 Cor 11:2:

“I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”

Rev 21:2:

“And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband . . . the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”

The Incarnation Makes Possible a Spousal Union between God and Man

Marriage requires that the spouses

- (a) dwell *with* one another to share life together,
- (b) sacrifice themselves *for* one another,
- (c) and give themselves fully *to* the other.

Spousal Union Requires Dwelling with the Beloved

John 1:14

The Incarnation made it possible for Christ the Bridegroom to come visibly not just through exterior and inanimate signs, but in a way suited to enter into spousal union with human beings:

“The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.”

Christ comes not as fire or cloud, but in the flesh as man, to dwell among us as the Bridegroom.

Spousal Union Requires Dwelling with the Beloved

John 1:14

To express this idea of dwelling among us, John used a Greek word, ἐσκήνωσεν, that is as close as possible to both the meaning and the very sound of the Hebrew *shachan* (to dwell), which means to dwell as in a tent. The root of this verb (σκηνή) was chosen by the translators of the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word for the tabernacle or Ark of the Covenant in which the Lord “dwelt”: *mishkhan* (מִשְׁכָּן).

Spousal Union Requires Sacrifice for the Beloved

Ephesians 5:25–27

“Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.”

Spousal Union Requires Giving Oneself to the Beloved

John 6:56–57

“He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me.”

The Son of God took on our flesh and blood so that His flesh and blood, given “for the life of the world” (John 6:51), might also be given to us, enabling us to abide in His divine life.

The Incarnation and the Eucharist

- The reasons of fittingness for the Incarnation are the same as those for the institution of the Eucharist. The Eucharist, with its three aspects of **presence**, **sacrifice**, and **communion**, shows us the three principal purposes of the Incarnation.
- The Eucharist enables us to have a threefold encounter with the Word Incarnate, even after His Ascension.

Fittingness of the Incarnation according to St. Thomas Aquinas

Summa Theologiae III, q. 1, aa. 1-2.

The Incarnation Is Fitting to God, Because Goodness Is Diffusive of Itself

Summa Theologiae III, q. 1, a. 1.

“To each thing that is befitting which belongs to it by reason of its very nature; thus, to reason befits man, since this belongs to him because he is of a rational nature. But the very nature of God is goodness, as is clear from Dionysius (*Divine Names* 1). Hence, what belongs to the essence of goodness befits God. But it belongs to the essence of goodness to communicate itself to others, as is plain from Dionysius (*Divine Names* 4).”

The Incarnation Is Fitting to God, Because Goodness Is Diffusive of Itself

Summa Theologiae III, q. 1, a. 1.

“Hence it belongs to the essence of the highest good to communicate itself in the highest manner to the creature, and this is brought about chiefly by “His so joining created nature to Himself that one Person is made up of these three—the Word, a soul and flesh,” as Augustine says (*De Trin.* 13). Hence it is manifest that it was fitting that God should become incarnate.”

***The Incarnation Is Fitting to God, Because Goodness
Is Diffusive of Itself***

Summa Theologiae III, q. 1, a. 1.

“It would seem most fitting that by visible things the invisible things of God should be made known; for to this end was the whole world made, as is clear from the word of the Apostle (Rom 1:20):

‘For the invisible things of Him ... are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.’”

The Incarnation Is Fitting to God, Because Goodness Is Diffusive of Itself

Summa Theologiae III, q. 1, a. 1.

“But, as Damascene says ..., by the mystery of the Incarnation are made known at once the goodness, the wisdom, the justice, the power or the might of God—the ‘goodness, for He did not despise the weakness of His own handiwork; the justice, since, on man’s defeat, He caused the tyrant to be overcome by none other than man, and yet He did not snatch men forcibly from death; the wisdom, for He found a suitable discharge for a most heavy debt; the power, or infinite might, for there is nothing greater than for God to become incarnate.’”

Fittingness of the Incarnation according to St. Thomas Aquinas

Summa Theologiae III, q. 1, a. 2.

The Incarnation Is Fitting to Human Salvation in
Ten Ways:

Five to establish us in grace,
and five to save us from evils.

The Fittingness of the Incarnation to Establish Us in the Supernatural Good

ST III, q. 1, a. 2.

The Incarnation Gives a Firmer Foundation to Faith

Hebrews 1:1–2:

“In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.”

The Fittingness of the Incarnation to Establish Us in the Supernatural Good

ST III, q. 1, a. 2.

The Incarnation as Foundation for Hope

Romans 8:30:

“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?”

If He has done the greater by becoming man and dying for us to merit our salvation, then we can be sure that nothing will be lacking on His part in what is less, which is the applying to us of the merits of Christ.

The Fittingness of the Incarnation to Establish Us in the Supernatural Good

ST III, q. 1, a. 2.

The Incarnation as Foundation for Hope

St. Augustine, *The City of God*:

Nothing “was so necessary for raising our hopes . . . than to show how highly God esteemed us and how much He loved us. But what is more manifest and more glorious in this so great a proof of God’s love, than . . . the Son of God . . . deigning to enter into fellowship with our nature?”

The Fittingness of the Incarnation to Establish Us in the Supernatural Good

ST III, q. 1, a. 2.

The Incarnation as the Greatest Motive for Charity

“Thirdly, with regard to *charity*, which is greatly enkindled by this; hence Augustine says (*On Catechizing the Uninstructed* 4): “What greater cause is there of the Lord’s coming than to show God’s love for us?... If we have been slow to love, at least let us hasten to love in return.”

The Fittingness of the Incarnation to Establish Us in the Supernatural Good

ST III, q. 1, a. 2.

The Incarnation as the Greatest Motive for Charity

John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave His only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

The Fittingness of the Incarnation to Establish Us in the Supernatural Good

Summa Theologiae III, q. 1, a. 2.

Incarnation as Model of All Virtue

St. Thomas quotes St. Augustine here:

“Man who might be seen was not to be followed; but God was to be followed, Who could not be seen. And therefore God was made man, that He Who might be seen by man, and Whom man might follow, might be shown to man.”

The Fittingness of the Incarnation to Establish Us in the Supernatural Good

ST III, q. 1, a. 2.

The Divine Interchange

- The Incarnation is the most perfect means to give us a share in Christ's divinity and sonship, which we receive first through grace and then through glory. The Son of God becomes man to make the sons of men into sons of God.
- This is a favorite theme of the Fathers and the overarching reason of fittingness for the Incarnation.
- By uniting human nature with His divine Person, Christ enabled mankind to receive a share in the divine nature.

Fittingness of the Incarnation to Save Us from Sin and Evil

ST III, q. 1, a. 2.

The Incarnation Overthrows the Cult of Demons

Genesis 3:15: which speaks of the offspring of the Woman who will crush the serpent's head.

Matthew 12:29: Jesus says, "Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house."

Fittingness of the Incarnation to Save Us from Sin and Evil

Summa Theologiae III, q. 1, a. 2.

The Incarnation Overthrows the Cult of Demons

Hebrews 2:14–15: “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage.”

Fittingness of the Incarnation to Save Us from Sin and Evil

Superabundant Manifestation of Human Dignity

Pope St. Leo the Great: “Realize, O Christian, your dignity. Once made a ‘partaker in the divine nature,’ do not return to your former baseness by a life unworthy [of that dignity]. Remember whose head it is and whose body of which you constitute a member.”

Fittingness of the Incarnation to Save Us from Sin and Evil

Superabundant Manifestation of Human Dignity

Gaudium et Spes, §22:

“The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him Who was to come, namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear.... He Who is ‘the image of the invisible God’ (Col. 1:15), is Himself the perfect man.”

Fittingness of the Incarnation to Save Us from Sin and Evil

Superabundant Manifestation of Human Dignity

Gaudium et Spes, §22:

“To the sons of Adam He restores the divine likeness which had been disfigured from the first sin onward. Since human nature as He assumed it was not annulled, by that very fact it has been raised up to a divine dignity in our respect too. For by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man. He worked with human hands, He thought with a human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart.”

Fittingness of the Incarnation to Save Us from Sin and Evil

ST III, q. 1, a. 2.

The Incarnation Is the Best Antidote to Presumption

Faith in the Incarnation is the best remedy to presumption, for it manifests that the forgiveness of sins and divinization has to come from God and cannot be accomplished by human effort and holiness alone; a creature cannot divinize himself or scale heaven.

St. Thomas says: “in order to do away with man’s presumption, the grace of God is commended in Jesus Christ, though no merits of ours went before,’ as Augustine says (*De Trin.* 13).”

Fittingness of the Incarnation to Save Us from Sin and Evil

ST III, q. 1, a. 2.

The Incarnation Is the Most Perfect Remedy for Pride

The Incarnation counters pride by showing us the humility of God, who “emptied Himself” (see Phil 2:5–11) to take on our weakness, to the point of dying on the Cross to satisfy for all human sin as if it were His.

Fittingness of the Incarnation to Save Us from Sin and Evil

ST III, q. 1, a. 2.

The Incarnation Is the Most Perfect Remedy for Pride

In the Incarnation divine majesty takes on the humility of a human life in all its stages. The divine power becomes an embryo, an infant in swaddling clothes, a man flogged by Roman soldiers and nailed to a Cross. Majesty takes on humility, power takes on weakness, glory takes on humiliation, divine love takes on a vulnerability to human hate and abuse.

Fittingness of the Incarnation to Save Us from Sin and Evil

ST III, q. 1, a. 2.

The Incarnation Makes Possible a Perfect Reparation for All Sin

St. Thomas Aquinas:

“So also was this useful . . . to free man from the thralldom of sin, which, as Augustine says (*De Trinitate* 13.13), ‘ought to be done in such a way that the devil should be overcome by the justice of the man Jesus Christ,’ and this was done by Christ satisfying for us. Now a mere man could not have satisfied for the whole human race, and God was not bound to satisfy; hence it was necessary for Jesus Christ to be both God and man.”

Fittingness of the Incarnation to Save Us from Sin and Evil

ST III, q. 1, a. 2.

The Incarnation Makes Possible a Perfect Reparation for All Sin

St. Leo the Great:

“In order to pay the debt of our fallen state, inviolable nature was united to one capable of suffering so that (and this is the reparation we needed) one and the same mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, could die in the one nature and not die in the other. . . . For to have possessed one of these without the other was of no value for salvation.”

Disputed Question:

Would the Word Have Become Incarnate if Man Had Not Sinned?

ST III, q. 1, a. 3.

- If the principal purpose of the Incarnation is to save man from sin, then it would seem that if mankind had not sinned, God would not have become incarnate.
- But since the Incarnation also serves as the best means for God to elevate man to the supernatural order, to give him a participation in the divine life, and to realize a spousal union with mankind, then it would still be fitting for God to become man even if there were no sin. But in such a case Christ would not suffer a Passion and death.

Disputed Question:

Would the Word Have Become Incarnate if Man Had Not Sinned?

ST III, q. 1, a. 3.

“There are different opinions about this question. For some say that even if man had not sinned, the Son of Man would have become incarnate. Others assert the contrary, and seemingly our assent ought rather to be given to this opinion. For such things as spring from God’s will, and beyond the creature’s due, can be made known to us only through being revealed in the Sacred Scripture, in which the Divine Will is made known to us.”

Disputed Question:

Would the Word Have Become Incarnate if Man Had Not Sinned?

ST III, q. 1, a. 3.

“Hence, since everywhere in the Sacred Scripture the sin of the first man is assigned as the reason of the Incarnation, it is more in accord with this to say that the work of the Incarnation was ordained by God as a remedy for sin; so that, had sin not existed, the Incarnation would not have been. And yet the power of God is not limited to this; even had sin not existed, God could have become incarnate.”

**Disputed Question:
Would the Word Have Become Incarnate if Man
Had Not Sinned?**

ST III, q. 1, a. 3.

Felix Culpa

The Easter vigil speaks of Adam's sin as a *felix culpa*: "O love, O charity beyond all telling, to ransom a slave you gave away your Son! O truly necessary sin of Adam, destroyed completely by the Death of Christ! O happy fault that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!"

Fittingness of the Time of the Incarnation

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* IV, ch. 55, n. 12

St. Thomas Aquinas gives three fundamental reasons for the delay of the Incarnation:

- 1) mankind needed to experience his own misery before the Incarnation,
- 2) mankind needed to be suitably prepared to receive the supreme gift and culmination of revelation,
- 3) mankind needed to be brought to great expectation for the coming of the Messiah so that His advent would be the fulfillment of ardent longing.

Fittingness of the Time of the Incarnation

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* IV, ch. 55, n. 12

“As the coming of a great king must be preceded by a number of envoys to prepare his subjects to receive him more reverently, so many things had to precede the coming of God to the earth to prepare men for the reception of the incarnate God. Indeed, this did take place when, because of the promises and testimonies that had gone before, the minds of men were disposed the more readily to believe Him who had had envoys before Him, and the more eagerly to receive Him because of the previous promises.”

Fittingness of the Time of the Incarnation

John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, §1

“The Redeemer of man, Jesus Christ, is the *centre* of the universe and of history. . . . God entered the history of humanity and, as a man, became an actor in that history, one of the thousands of millions of human beings but at the same time Unique! Through the Incarnation God gave human life the dimension that he intended man to have from his first beginning.”

Fittingness of the Time of the Incarnation

Population Reference Bureau

If the origins of mankind date from around 50,000 to 100,000 BC, then the Incarnation came after about 96-98% of human history.

With regard to population, however, the Incarnation is roughly in the middle of that history. The Population Reference Bureau estimates that the number of human beings who have lived on the earth is about 106 billion (taking 50,000 BC as the origin of *homo sapiens*). They estimate that 47 billion people lived before Christ, which is a little less than half.

Why Did the Second Person of the Trinity Become Man?

The Son of God Comes to Give Us a Share in His Sonship

It is most fitting for the Son to become incarnate because the Incarnation is ordered to making human beings adopted sons of God, a dignity lost for all humanity through original sin. God's gracious plan was to introduce human beings into the communion of the Blessed Trinity. Our place in that communion cannot be as "fathers in the Father," but only as *sons in the Son*, for we are not the source either of our natural or our supernatural life.

Why Did the Second Person of the Trinity Become Man?

ST III, q. 3, a. 8.

The Son of God Comes to Give Us a Share in His Sonship

St. Thomas writes:

“Hence it was fitting that by Him Who is the natural Son, men should share this likeness of sonship by adoption, as the Apostle says in the same chapter (Rom 8:29): ‘For whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son.’”

Why Did the Second Person of the Trinity Become Man?

The Word, Who Is the Image of the Father, Comes to Restore the Image of God in Man

- Since God created all things through His Word, who is the divine “Exemplar” for the creation of all things, it is fitting that we be re-created through that same Word made flesh. Thus the Son, who is the perfect Image of the Father (see Col 1:15), became manifested in the flesh to re-form man into a perfect image of His glory, bringing us “to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph 4:13).

Why Did the Second Person of the Trinity Become Man?

The Word, Who Is the Image of the Father, Comes to Restore the Image of God in Man

Aidan Nichols:

“Just as a craftsman repairs damage in something he has made by reference to the idea of the thing which is in him, his creative conception of it, so it is fitting that God repairs humanity by means of the Son who is humanity’s exemplar.”

Why Did the Second Person of the Trinity Become Man?

The Word, the Image of the Father, Comes to Restore the Image of God in Man

St. Athanasius:

“Who was needed for such grace and recalling except the God Word who in the beginning made the universe from non-being? For his it was once more both to bring the corruptible to incorruptibility and to save the superlative consistency of the Father. Being the Word of the Father and above all, he alone consequently was both able to recreate the universe and was worthy to suffer on behalf of all and to intercede for all before the Father.”

Why Did the Second Person of the Trinity Become Man?

Order of the Divine Persons

Hugh of St. Victor:

“Now the Son, not the Father nor the Holy Spirit, was sent, because it was not fitting that the Father who was not from another should be sent by another.”

- And since the Son, together with the Father, breathes forth the Holy Spirit as the fruit of their love, the Son can send us the Spirit as the fruit of the Incarnation.